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THE BOLOVENS CAMPAIGN 28 JULY - 28 DECEMBER 1971

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14. ABSTRACT Project CHECO was established in 1962 to document and analyze air operations in Southeast Asia. Over the years the meaning of the acronym changed several times to reflect the escalation of operations: Current Historical Evaluation of Counterinsurgency Operations, Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations and Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations. Project CHECO and other U. S. Air Force Historical study programs provided the Air Force with timely and lasting corporate insights into operational, conceptual and doctrinal lessons from the war in SEA.					
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Examination of

Current

Operations

REPORT

THE BOLOVENS CAMPAIGN

28 JULY - 28 DECEMBER 1971

8 MAY 1974

HQ PACAF
Directorate of Operations Analysis
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST DIVISION

Prepared by:

Project CHECO 7th AF

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PROJECT CHECO REPORTS

The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in USAF airpower being employed to meet a multitude of requirements. These varied applications have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, operational data and experiences have accumulated which should be collected, documented, and analyzed for current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity which would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA and would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations, was established to meet the Air Staff directive. Based on the policy guidance of the Office of Air Force History and managed by Hq PACAF, with elements in Southeast Asia, Project CHECO provides a scholarly "on-going" historical examination, documentation, and reporting on USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in PACOM. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and examination which is being accomplished. It is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in PACOM when used in proper context. The reader must view the study in relation to the events and circumstances at the time of its preparation--recognizing that it was prepared on a contemporary basis which restricted perspective and that the author's research was limited to records available within his local headquarters area.

Robert E. Hiller

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Chief, Operations Analysis
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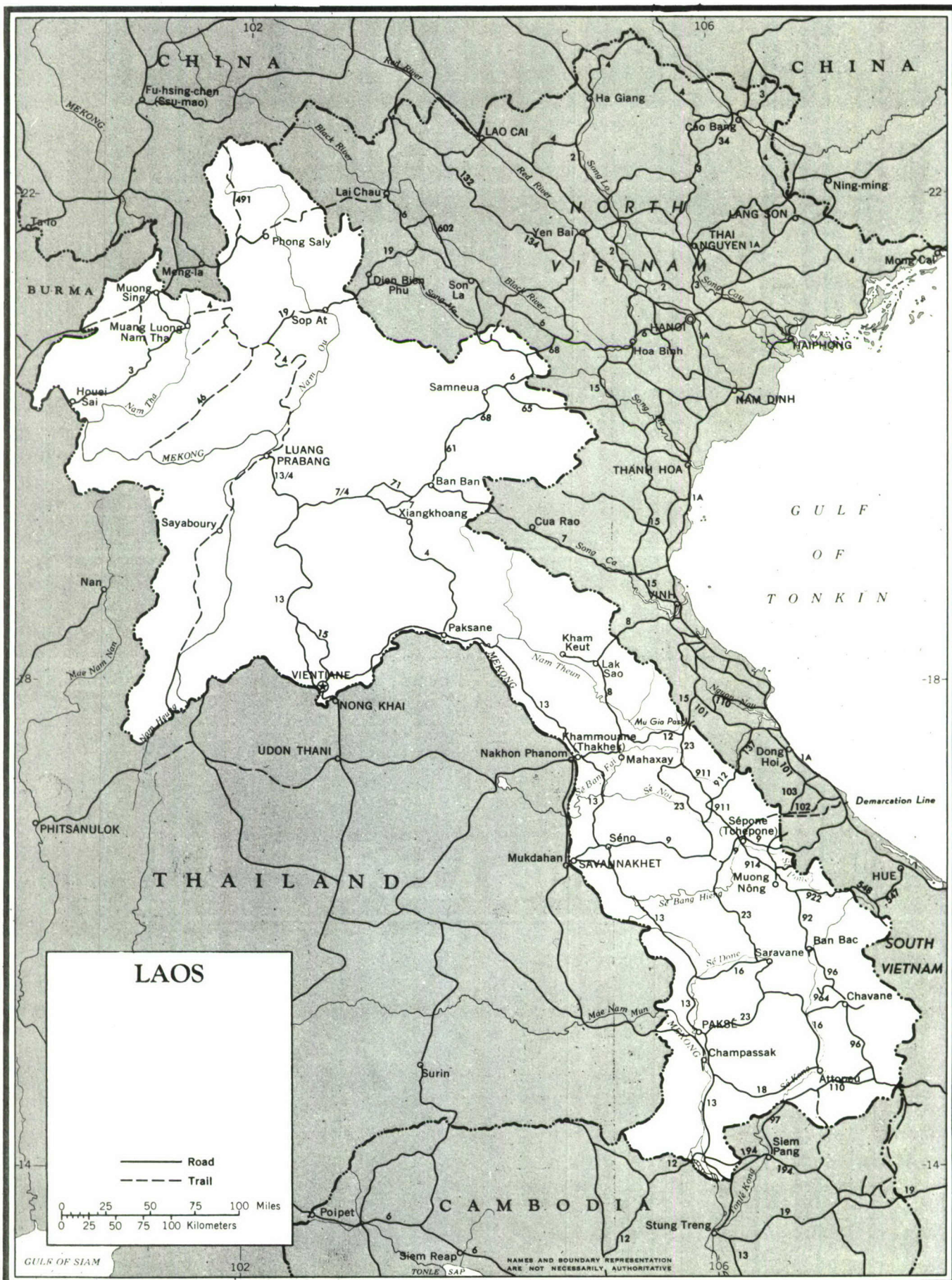
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EDITOR'S NOTE

(U) The primary authors of this report were: 1Lt Donald G. Hukle, Mr. Melvin F. Porter, Maj Paul T. Ringenbach, Maj Richard R. Sexton, 1Lt Judith A. Skipworth, and Capt Adolf H. Zabka.

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Figure 1

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INTRODUCTION

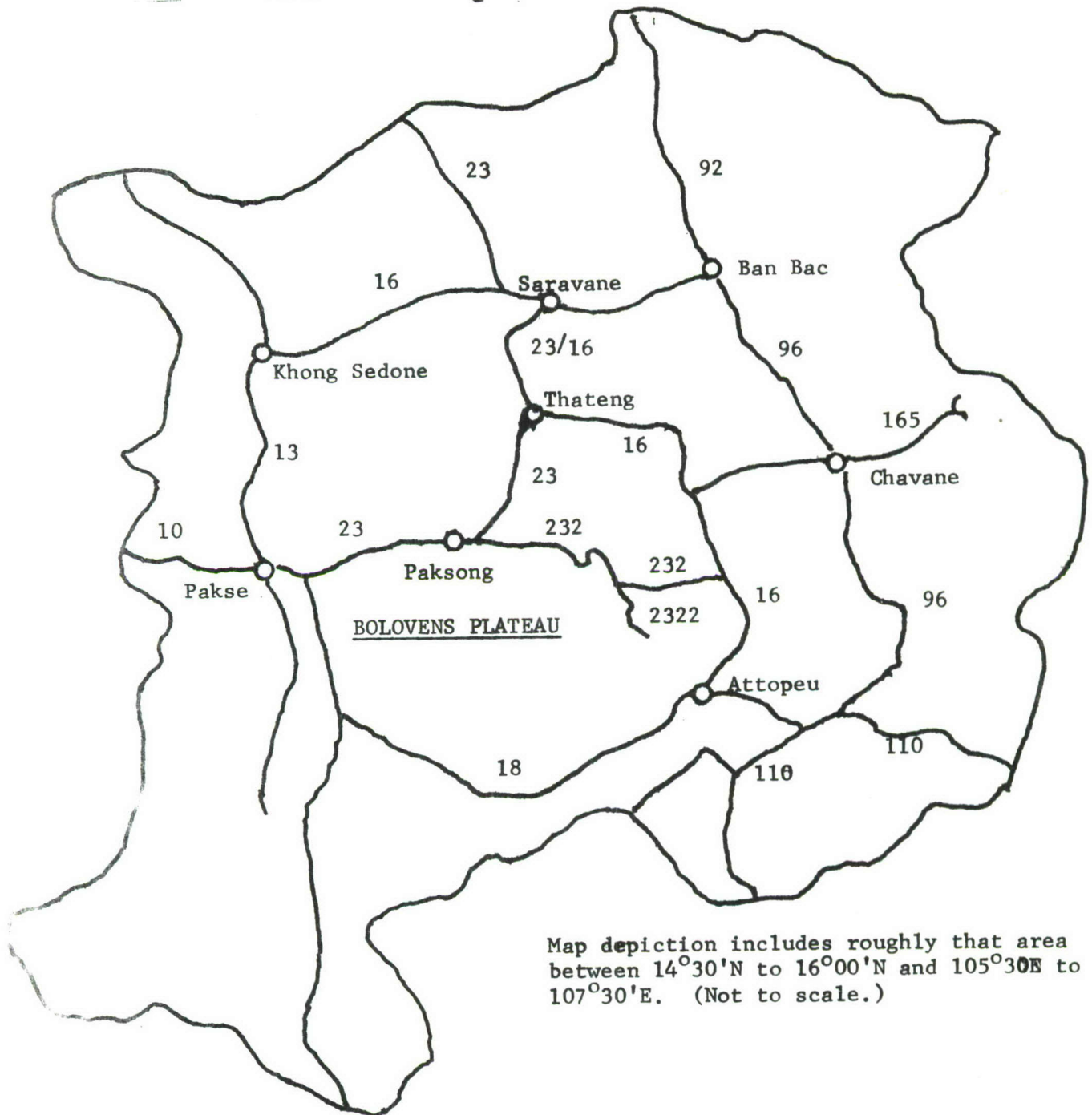
(U) The steeply rising Bolovens Plateau overlooks verdant valleys on all sides and dominates the southernmost part of Laos. The Bolovens is strategically important because of its agriculture and location. Most of the population of this area live in rich, crop-producing valleys near the three market towns of Saravane, Attapeu, and Pakse. (See Figure 2.) To the west of the Bolovens lies the Mekong River and the Thai border; to the south, Cambodia. To the east runs a portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail used by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) as the lifeblood artery for supplying Communist units fighting in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

(U) After the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1962, there was little sustained fighting in the Bolovens area between the Communists and Royal Laotian Government (RLG) units until early 1965. During 1965, increased use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail by the NVA led to greater food requisitioning and impressment of the local population for labor, which in turn led to more frequent attacks in southern Laos, as the North Vietnamese purposefully extended their control westward. By January of 1968, which marked the beginning of over three years of sporadic but sometimes bitter fighting for control of the Bolovens, the Communists had driven government forces out of Lao Ngam in the northern foothills of the Bolovens and opened the valley of the Done river as far south as Pakse to Pathet Lao (PL) requisitioning and recruiting activity.

(U) The sudden removal on 18 March 1970 of the Cambodian head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, in a *coup d'etat* deprived the Communists

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PORTION OF MR IV SURROUNDING THE BOLOVENS PLATEAU



Map depiction includes roughly that area between $14^{\circ}30'N$ to $16^{\circ}00'N$ and $105^{\circ}30'E$ to $107^{\circ}30'E$. (Not to scale.)

Figure 2

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of vital landing* and transit rights granted them by Sihanouk and forced them into total dependence on the Ho Chi Minh Trail to move supplies southwestward into the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. In an effort to counteract this serious loss the Communists elected to reorganize and expand their supply routes by using a main waterway, the Kong river, that flows southward to Cambodia. First, however, they had to dispose of the last remaining military obstacle along that waterway, the Royal Lao Army garrison at Attopeu. This posed no serious problem to the NVA. For years they had controlled the countryside around the town of 5,000 people, apparently content to build their supply routes around Attopeu leaving the garrison of two battalions isolated and unmolested as long as they did not venture too far out into the countryside. This peaceful accommodation ended on the night of 28 April 1970 when the NVA launched their attack. On the second night, when the NVA offered to let them evacuate if they laid down their arms, the 400 Royal Army troops accepted the condition and walked out of the area using the sole escape route, north along the base of the steep sides of the Bolovens.

(U) Subsequently, after a series of hard-fought battles, the Communists gained control of the eastern rim of the Bolovens in August of 1970. Less than a year later, on 16 May 1971, the last of the Royal government forces

*They had enjoyed access to Cambodia's port facilities, and had extensively utilized the port at Sihanoukville (subsequently renamed Kampong Saom) to bring in military supplies destined for their forces in southern Southeast Asia.

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were defeated and driven from the plateau. Complete control of the Bolovens permitted the enemy to expand his lines of communication (LOCs) west and south, gave him strategic high ground from which to move into the valleys and, also, to protect the Trail, and, significantly, denied the use of air-strips on the plateau which had been extensively used to infiltrate and exfiltrate RLG troops for reconnaissance and interdiction operations of the Trail.

~~(S)~~ From 28 July to 28 December 1971, the Royal Laotian Government conducted a military campaign to regain control of this important territory. This was primarily a ground campaign, with the United States Air Force's role limited because (1) the campaign was, in large part, carried on during the wet season and bad weather restricted U.S. air support, (2) the targets were primarily dispersed, mobile, small units against which high speed and costly USAF tactical air (TACAIR) would not have been as efficient as the RLAF* equipment, (3) campaign planners in Laos failed to coordinate air support requirements early enough with responsible Air Force units, and (4) the scheduling of U.S. TACAIR, which was needed to support operations in Vietnam, Cambodia, and other areas of Laos, was a problem. Competing demands for TACAIR, coordinating delays, the requirement to frag USAF TACAIR a day or more in advance, and its relatively short loiter time, generally militated against the use of USAF TACAIR in favor of the RLAF. However, on the few occasions that the enemy was massed and the military situation was critical and less fluid, the American

*Royal Laotian Air Force.

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Embassy effectively employed USAF TACAIR in the Bolovens campaign. Nevertheless, for pro-government forces the five-month campaign ended in frustration as the NVA, after initial setbacks, retained control of the area. It is this struggle between the RLG forces and the PL/NVA for control of the Bolovens Plateau which is the subject of this report.

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CHAPTER I

THE BOLOVENS CAMPAIGN: PLANS

~~(S)~~ Shortly after the loss of the Bolovens in May 1971, Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma ordered government forces to retake the area, and on 9 June a counter-attack was launched against the enemy. Known as Operation Phiboonpol, the friendly offensive lasted only two days, and ended with the friendly forces in disarray.

~~(S)~~ The United States Ambassador to Laos, G. McMurtrie Godley, felt that, aside from purely operational considerations, the recapture of the Plateau was necessary if the RLG hoped to successfully force the enemy to come to the bargaining table to negotiate a compromise peace settlement. The Ambassador instructed his Controlled American Source (CAS) elements to plan, in conjunction with the Laotian general staff, a campaign which would successfully bring the Bolovens back under RLG control. With the wet season impeding enemy resupply efforts, it was believed that RLG forces would have the advantage and be able to conduct a successful counter-offensive. Officials also believed that by driving hard, government troops could establish strong defensive positions at forward locations which would make additional enemy gains during the next dry season much more difficult.

~~(S)~~ The code name for the battle plan emerging from this joint planning activity was Operation Sayasila. In brief, the plan specified an all-RLG ground operation with the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) providing the necessary air support. Principal objectives of the plan were: (1)

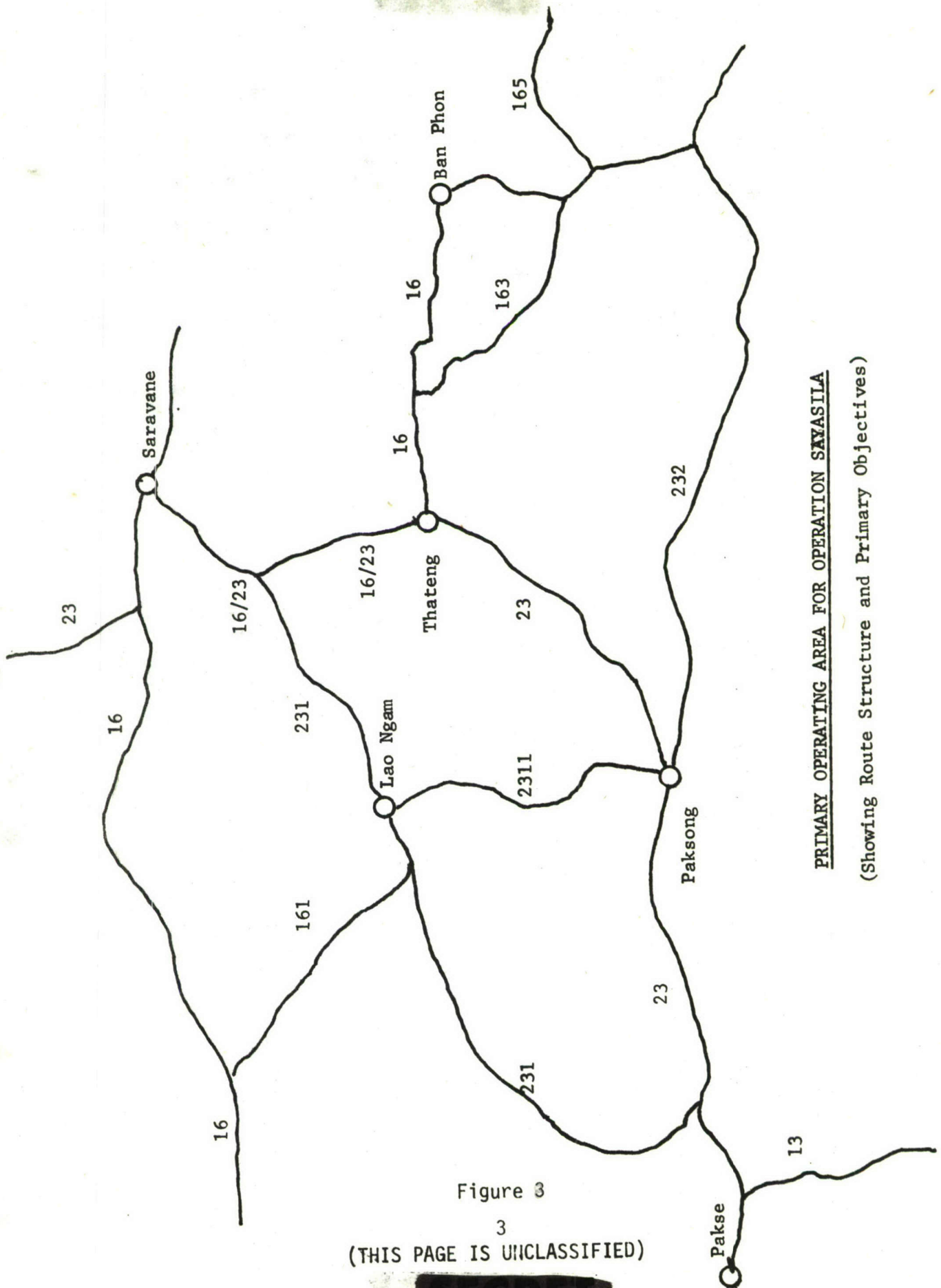
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capture and hold the provincial capital of Saravane for a short period of time; (2) interdict Route 16/23 west of Saravane; (3) destroy the enemy logistics base south of the Se Don (Xe Don) River and north of Lao Ngam; and (4) recapture Paksong and clear Route 23 west and north of town. (See Figure 3.) The operation was to begin at the end of July.⁴

(b) Operation Sayasila was to be conducted in two phases. In Phase I (to be completed the first day) Saravane and its airstrip were to be secured. This would divert the enemy's attention from the Lao Ngam/Paksong sector, and, by bringing the provincial capital under RLG control,⁵ would be a psychological boost for the government. Phase II, scheduled to begin on the second day, was to be an all-out effort to secure Route 23 and the town of Paksong with its surrounding high ground.⁶

(c) During the final planning for the operation, campaign organizers re-evaluated the decision that all air support would be provided by the RLAF, and three days before the operation was to begin belatedly requested United States air support. The petition for United States assistance came as a result of an analysis of the RLAF capability and enemy strength. The Air Attache (AIRA) in Vientiane was to arrange for U.S. tactical air support for the duration of the campaign (then estimated at 30 days), and he requested 12 sorties of fighters per day.⁷ A division of the air support effort for Military Region (MR) IV was established for RLAF and USAF aircraft. RLAF T-28s would be employed mainly in a direct air support role and RLAF AC-47s would provide primary night support in all areas throughout

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PRIMARY OPERATING AREA FOR OPERATION SAYASILA

(Showing Route Structure and Primary Objectives)

Figure 3

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the campaign, while U.S. TACAIR would be employed against anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), troops in contact (TIC), known storage areas, and targets of opportunity during daylight hours. U.S. gunship support would not be fragged, but would be provided on a divert basis throughout the operation.⁸ Airlift of supplies and troops would be conducted jointly by the RLAF, civilian contractor (Air America), and USAF CH-3 and CH-53⁹ helicopters controlled by 7/13 Air Force.

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CHAPTER II
OPERATION SAYASILA

Phase I - Saravane

Elements from the three primary government fighting organizations in Laos--the American-financed irregular guerrilla forces, regular Laotian rightist forces known as the Forces Armees Royale (FAR), and regular neutralist forces designated as the Forces Armees Neutralist (FAN)--¹⁰ were joined for Operation Sayasila. On 28 July 1971, Phase I began. Irregular troops had massed at an airstrip near Ban Koutlamphong (WC8833*), more familiarly known as Papa (for Pakse) Site Number 47 (PS-47). (See Figure 4.) Early that morning, helicopters began shuttling the irregulars to a helicopter landing zone (HLZ) approximately two kilometers south of Saravana [Lima Site (LS)-44, XC5237]. Although intelligence reports indicated that the North Vietnamese were building troop strength in the area, friendly forces entering the provincial capital of Saravane found the town deserted.

At 0940 hours, the RLG flag was raised over the control tower at the airstrip, and shortly thereafter, irregulars occupied Saravane, bringing the city under government control. By 1200 hours, friendly forces had set up a command post and assigned battalion defensive positions northeast, west, and southwest of the town. Although American Forward Air Controllers (FACs) (using the call sign RAVEN) provided air surveillance during the

*Coordinates in the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Grid System.

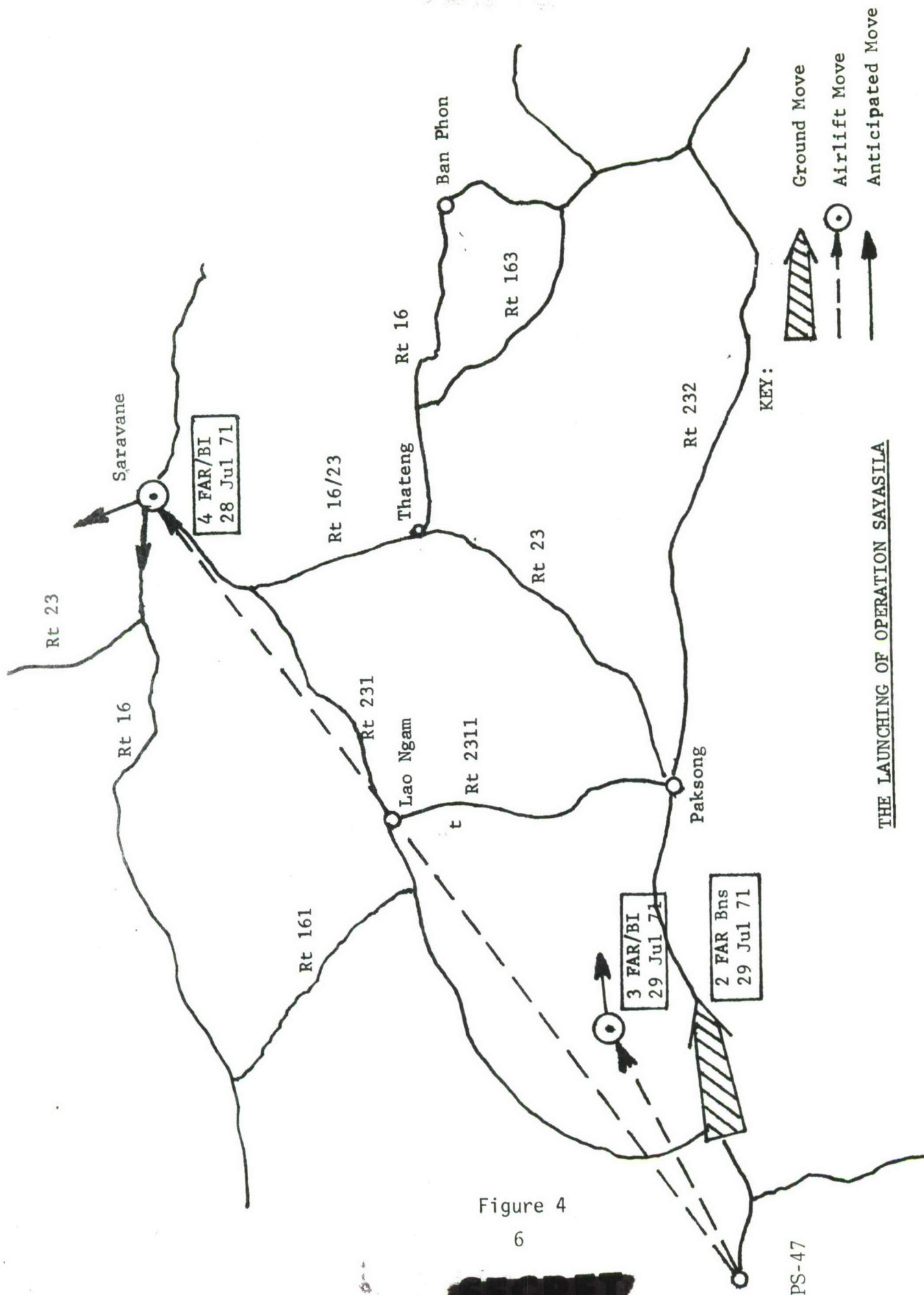


Figure 4

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infiltration and occupation, they directed no TACAIR strikes because of the lack of lucrative targets.

(S) On the afternoon of 30 July, Sisouk Na Champassak (Lao Government Defense Deputy), General Bounpone Makthepharak (FAR Commander-in-Chief), General Phasouk Somly (FAR Chief of Staff), and General Sourith Don Sasorith (RLAF Commander) visited Saravane to officially integrate the area into RLG control, thereby boosting the morale of the RLG forces.¹¹

(S) Little significant combat activity occurred in the Saravane sector during the months of August and September. Contacts with the enemy were limited to small skirmishes with light casualties. Friendly units were dispatched from Saravane on search-and-destroy missions, the largest contingent being a four-battalion irregular task force sent to Lao Ngam where the only significant enemy-initiated activity during this two-month period occurred when the NVA conducted attacks by fire (ABF) against friendlies throughout the nights of 4 and 5 September. Government forces were supported by RLAF AC-47 gunships and later by USAF AC-119 gunships. Air support for the friendlies resulted in 80 enemy troops killed by air (KBA), as confirmed by a count conducted by the Forward Air Guide (FAG) in the area.¹² During the daylight hours, USAF and RLAF TACAIR destroyed enemy bunker complexes and supplies around Lao Ngam. Enemy activity continued to be isolated and apparently was not part of any major NVA-supported counter-offensive.¹³ Even though enemy pressure remained relatively light, RLG forces began to feel the impact of their long stay in the field.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] On 29 September, this same irregular task force near Lao Ngam began to experience disorder and morale problems. The four battalions comprising the force had spent 71 days in the field, walking more than 110 kilometers from Saravane to positions near Lao Ngam. During the night of 28 September, 74 men from one battalion deserted and returned to Pakse. In an attempt to discourage further desertion and to keep the task force together, the commander ordered the units to fall back to the west near Ban Navang, 10 kilometers southwest of Lao Ngam. On the afternoon of 29 September, General Ly (Military Region III Irregular Force Commander) visited the troops in an effort to bolster their morale. He directed the task force commander to remain in the Ban Navang area until 6 October when a relief Group Mobile* (GM) composed of FAN units would replace them.¹⁴

[REDACTED] The demoralized task force established new positions 13 kilometers southwest of Lao Ngam along Route 231. The formation of the FAN GM proceeded more slowly than originally anticipated due primarily to internal command problems and a reluctance to leave long-established base areas.¹⁵ As a result, 6 October passed without the promised relief for the irregulars. Eventually the irregular task force was withdrawn. A small pro-government force of four companies remained to fill the void, but was only a minor obstacle to the enemy when the NVA moved into Lao Ngam in December.¹⁶

[REDACTED] During October, the RLG continued to send patrolling units out from Saravane in an effort to keep the NVA off balance. The Military Region IV Command anticipated that the NVA would launch an attack to

*Similar to a regiment.

[REDACTED]

capture the town at the first opportunity, since Saravane was located in a rice-growing valley at a crucial crossroads for traffic leading into the Bolovens. The most organized sweep movement during this period was a friendly operation called Bethesda. Government forces encountered large concentrations of NVA south of Saravane, resulting in several fierce fire-fights. While Operation Bethesda was relatively short (ending on 12 October), commanders in the field considered the objective--keeping the enemy off balance--successfully accomplished.¹⁷

Phase II-- The North Attack on Paksong

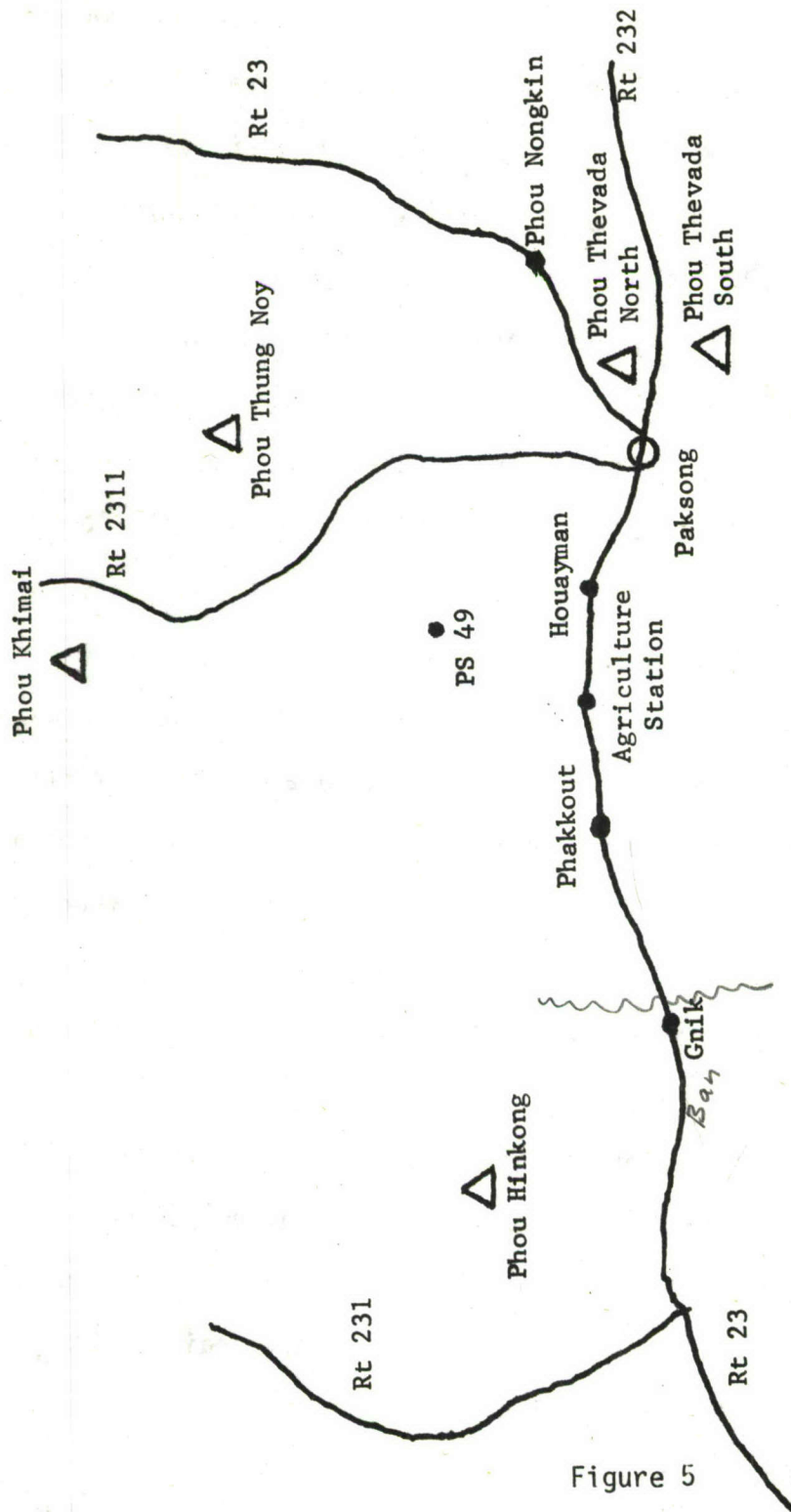
Phase II of Operation Sayasila was launched one day after the Royal Government raised the flag over Saravane, and was carried on simultaneously with Phase I operations north of the Bolovens. Phase II was concerned primarily with the reoccupation of the Bolovens Plateau and the recapture of the central-plateau town of Paksong (LS-180, XB3377). The original plan involved a two-pronged attack on the Bolovens, with one arm converging on Paksong from the north while the second arm moved along Route 23 toward Paksong from the west.¹⁸

The original RLG force operating north of Paksong was comprised of three FAR battalions--Battalions Volunteer (BV) 41 and 43 and Battalion Independent (BI) 4. These units began moving into an HLZ located northwest of Paksong at 0920 hours on 29 July. No enemy opposition was reported. By nightfall on the 29th, BVs 41 and 43 were in place; BI-4 was helilifted to the HLZ on 30 July.¹⁹ The total number of government troops in the task force stood at 1,250.

[REDACTED]

() On 30 July, the three battalions moved eastward on an axis parallel to Route 23 in order to attack Paksong from the north. (See Figure 5.) The task force encountered only minor opposition during its first two days in the field. Forward elements were approximately nine kilometers northwest of Paksong by noon on 31 July when the friendlies were attacked by NVA forces estimated at battalion size.²⁰ For the next several days, activity was limited mostly to small unit skirmishes with little friendly progress being made. On 11 August, the FAR task force, now located 11 kilometers northwest of Paksong, was attacked by a force estimated as consisting of three NVA battalions supported by heavy weapons. After being under enemy fire for nearly a full day, the FAR withdrew approximately seven kilometers to the northwest. During the engagement, no air support²¹ was requested.

(S) The three FAR units were replaced by two irregular battalions following the 11 August enemy attack. It was not until a week later that the friendlies northwest of Paksong were again moving toward their objective. The irregulars were able to advance to within five kilometers of Paksong when, on 25 August at 1330 hours, they were routed by another three-battalion NVA counter-attack. The irregulars fled to the northwest in disarray. During this all-day encounter, 100 enemy troops were killed in action (KIA) and many were wounded in action (WIA); the friendlies suffered 32 KIA, 39 WIA, and 192 missing in action (MIA).²²



("Phou": Laotian for Mountain)

PAKSONG AND VICINITY

Figure 5

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Phase II - Movement Along Route 23

(S) During the month of July 1971, the North Vietnamese were in the process of building a system of fortified bunkers and storage areas along Route 23 west of Paksong. The RLG launched a limited offensive on 6 July along the route near the western edge of the Plateau in opposition to this activity. These raids had little success, indicating that it was going to take an all-out effort if Paksong were going to be recaptured.²³

(S) On 29 July at 0800, a FAR battalion [Battalion Parachute (BP)-104] and a FAN battalion [Battalion Commando (BC)-207], accompanied by four armored cars, began moving east on Route 23 toward Ban Gnik (located 28 kilometers east of Pakse). This inaugurated Operation Sayasila's Phase II movement eastward along Route 23.²⁴

(S) In the vicinity of Ban Gnik, the battalions were blocked by an enemy force estimated at three companies firing small arms and 60 millimeter (mm) and 82mm recoilless guns from well-prepared positions. Following intense artillery and RLAF T-28²⁵ bombardment, Ban Gnik was finally secured at 1700 hours on 30 July. Over the next several days, friendly forces along the route made no progress. It appeared that they had encountered a large enemy holding force.

(S) During the second week of Operation Sayasila, BC-207 and BP-104 were supplemented by BI-7 and BI-9. The force augmentation was partially due to the lack of progress the original two battalions had made along Route 23. On 6 August, BI-7 and BI-9 launched an attack against Ban Phakkout, located eight kilometers west of Paksong on Route 23. The town was secured that afternoon.²⁶

[REDACTED]

During the next week, the four-battalion task force was able to advance to an abandoned agricultural station halfway between Ban Phakkout and Ban Houayman. The friendly momentum, however, came to a halt at the station following fierce fighting in the area. A stalemate between the two opposing forces allowed the North Vietnamese to enhance their fortifications in and around Paksong in preparation for any future RLG drives. On 18 August, the four front-line battalions on Route 23 came under heavy attack; after three hours, Colonel Soutchay (MR IV Commander) ordered the units to withdraw to Ban Phakkout and regroup.²⁷

Over the next 10 days, no significant progress was made along Route 23 by the RLG. By 28 August, the units were still located between Ban Phakkout and the agricultural station. Visual reconnaissance (VR) of the Paksong area by RAVEN FACs revealed evidence of moderate to heavy build-up of enemy defenses along the route and in areas north of Paksong. The NVA could continue their delaying tactics for an extended period of time unless a coordinated RLG offensive was initiated against them, or improved weather permitted large-scale TACAIR strikes against known fortifications, thus forcing the outnumbered enemy to retreat from Paksong.²⁸

Since the campaign was making little progress, AIRA and CAS requested additional air support. AIRA specifically wanted 28 sorties of F-4s per day fraggd to MR IV RAVEN FACs for the period 1-5 September. These sorties, which were "not to be taken from Barrel Roll assets," were to be in addition to the 12 previously allocated.²⁹ Also, instrument flying rule (IFR) boxes were designated around Paksong which would enable U.S. TACAIR and the RLAF to strike predirected target areas during adverse weather conditions.

[REDACTED]

(S) The decision to request additional sorties was agreed upon by AIRA and CAS during planning sessions on 30-31 August and forwarded to 7/13th Air Force at Udorn. With only an 11-hour lead time before the first time over target (TOT), 7/13th AF was able to coordinate the request with 7th AF which approved the allocation of 40 sorties per day for MR IV until 5 September.³⁰

(S) The additional sorties were fragged on 1 and 2 September and ground forces west of Paksong received a large increase in air support on 3 September, when a total of 73 RLAF/USAF TACAIR sorties were flown. FACs noted that U.S. TACAIR destroyed many bunker complexes along Route 23. Nevertheless, friendly units on Route 23 remained stationary just east of Ban Phakkout, and the enemy continued to build new bunkers and trenches despite the additional air support.³¹

(S) Since the authority for the additional MR IV sorties expired on 5 September, AIRA requested 46 sorties per day to be fragged to the region. Seven/Thirteenth Air Force again coordinated the request with Seventh Air Force, which then fragged 46 sorties per day for the next 21 days. (On several occasions during this period, the number of sorties was increased to 52.)³²

(S) Despite the air support, the friendlies at Ban Phakkout remained stationary, subjected to constant artillery and mortar fire. During the daylight hours of 7 September, 65 USAF/RLAF TACAIR sorties were flown to support the pro-government forces in the Paksong area. The RLAF flew 39 T-28s, and the USAF flew 24 F-4s and two A-1s. The U.S. Navy also had 28 A-7s in the area.³³

[REDACTED]

Phase II - Capture of Paksong

~~(b)~~ On 11 September, the government drive on Paksong resumed when a four-battalion irregular task force was helilifted from a point 30 kilometers south of Pakse to an HLZ nine kilometers southeast of Paksong. Clear weather permitted TACAIR support, and strikes were conducted against enemy positions on Phou Khimai and Phou Thevada South. Supplementing air support, the friendlies along Route 23 initiated an artillery barrage from Ban Gnik in an effort to pin down the enemy forces and prevent an enemy reaction against the heliborne insertion to the southeast; approximately 500 rounds of 105mm howitzer fire were directed against North Vietnamese units in the vicinity of the agricultural station.³⁴

~~(b)~~ The battle plan called for the infiltrated troops to move north and then west, hitting Paksong from the east.³⁵ When the helilift was completed, the irregulars followed this strategy and quickly moved to within six kilometers of Paksong by 1800 hours on 11 September. The evening hours brought a stiff enemy counter to the advance. Heavy small arms fire resulted in 12 irregulars KIA and 21 WIA.³⁶

~~(b)~~ The final groundwork for the eventual assault on Paksong was laid on 12 September when FAR BI-9 and a composite battalion of BI-7 and FAN BC-207 were helilifted to an HLZ seven kilometers east of Paksong. No difficulties were encountered during the operation. These two battalions joined with the two irregular battalions that had moved up from the south; together, the friendlies quickly captured the twin peaks of Phou Thevada overlooking Paksong. In addition to TACAIR, the enemy was now faced with government units to the east, west, and northwest.³⁷

[REDACTED]

() On 14 September, with TACAIR striking suspected mortar positions outside the town, two 10-man teams entered Paksong from the east and reported only sporadic enemy small arms fire. By 15 September, the city had been surrounded and small infantry units were attempting to clear the town of all remaining NVA. Fighting reportedly raged hand-to-hand and from house-to-house, climaxing in a firefight between the friendlies and the North Vietnamese in the lobby of the town's only hotel. During this action, the troops who were supposed to provide security outside the city became so excited by the battle inside the city that they abandoned their own positions and ran into the town to join in the melee. By the end of the day, the town was under the control of the RLG.³⁸ The battle to take Paksong was supported by 422 U.S. TACAIR sorties from the beginning until the middle of September 1971.³⁹

() On 16 September, to provide security in outlying areas, 182 men of an irregular battalion were helilifted to a point two kilometers south of Paksong.⁴⁰ On 19 September, two FAR battalions were helilifted into the town to establish additional defensive positions and to free the irregular battalions for further offensive operations.⁴¹ Although the irregular task force in the Paksong area was under strength, its morale was high.

() The next several days were relatively quiet although an irregular battalion tenuously occupied Phou Nongkin, a position overlooking Route 23 seven kilometers northeast of Paksong⁴² and the enemy continued to harass the RLG forces with shellings and mortar fire, especially along Route 23 between Paksong and the agricultural station (which was still not secure).

[REDACTED]

Small unit ground assaults were directed against friendly outposts, and⁴³
Phou Nongkin changed hands twice between 19 and 26 September.

(S) During the period from 25 September to 2 October, bad weather over most of the Bolovens Plateau restricted air support and interdiction efforts against enemy units regrouping north of Paksong and NVA forces occupying sectors of Route 23 near Ban Phakkout.⁴⁴ Intelligence sources indicated that renewed enemy offensive moves against the RLG on the⁴⁵ Bolovens would commence as soon as the NVA had refitted. Therefore, government troops around Paksong spent most of their time improving defensive positions and patrolling.

(S) The major threat to the friendlies came from the north. When the RLG recaptured Paksong, the NVA 9th Regiment with most of its battalions had moved north to the vicinity of Thateng (LS-210, XC4870). Three other⁴⁶ enemy battalions remained in the immediate area northwest of Paksong. Elements of these enemy units continued to probe the defense perimeter of Paksong, utilizing economy-of-force tactics (mortar harassment and unpredictable weapons fire).

(S) Although the enemy was ever-present, they remained elusive. Rarely were lucrative targets available for RLAF and USAF TACAIR. Targets of opportunity would become lost to sight shortly after being observed. For example, on 7 October at 2250 hours, an RLAF AC-47 gunship (Spooky 625) reported sighting six enemy trucks led by one tank approximately 11 kilometers north of Paksong. The gunship expended on the target, but the results were not observed (RNO). A B-57 (Redbird 03) and an AC-130 (Spectre 22) were summoned

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shortly thereafter, but the target had disappeared under the jungle canopy.⁴⁷

(S) Though Paksong had been retaken by government forces in September, Route 23 leading west to Pakse remained to be cleared. By mid-October, enemy mortar positions had zeroed in on the Paksong landing strip, forcing resupply of the city by airdrop. Thus, it became necessary to clear the Pakse-Paksong road of the remaining NVA forces so that it could be used to supply RLG troops on the Bolovens. Consequently, the period from 18 to 23 October was spent clearing and securing Route 23. The effort involved a four-battalion force heading east from Ban Phakkout and a two-battalion force moving west from Paksong. These units were to meet between the agricultural station and Ban Houayman.⁴⁸

(S) The North Vietnamese attempted to thwart the friendlies by constant 82mm and 60mm mortar and 122mm rocket fire. In spite of the enemy resistance, government forces met as programmed on 20 October. By 23 October, the road was secure, and RLG engineers began to repair the road surface of damages sustained during the fighting.⁴⁹

(S) During the latter part of the month, government forces conducted two sweep operations in an effort to expand the RLG area of control around Paksong. The first, Operation Red Arrow, sent an irregular battalion south and southeast of Paksong as far as 19 kilometers from the city. Light enemy contact was reported, and the only significant occurrence during the sweep was the reoccupation of the twin peaks of Phou Thevada on 27 October, from which the friendlies had withdrawn earlier.⁵⁰

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(S) The second sweep operation, Phou Xang (Elephant Mountain), was launched to clear the area north of Paksong. Again enemy resistance was light even though an irregular battalion moved a distance of 19 kilometers north and northwest from Paksong. On 29 October, following TACAIR and artillery strikes, the irregulars captured Nongkin Village and Phou Nongkin. While both of these operations had inconclusive results, they did succeed in bringing virtually all the high points around Paksong under RLG control. 51

Operation Sayasila Ends

(S) On 1 November, CAS/Udorn advised the 7/13th AF Directorate of Intelligence that Operation Sayasila had been officially terminated on 31 October. The two primary goals of Operation Sayasila--recapturing Saravane and Paksong--had been attained. These two towns were secure under Royal Government control, and government activity now had to be concentrated on their defense. 52 The enemy continued to control much of the route structure in MR IV, which presented problems for RLG logistics and troop movements. The government had hoped that Route 16/23 west of Saravane would be interdicted and that the enemy logistics bases south of the Se Don River and north of Lao Ngam would be destroyed during Operation Sayasila. This, however, was not accomplished. Had the friendlies been able to succeed in these maneuvers, the North Vietnamese supply of food and equipment would possibly have become critical, perhaps impairing enemy activity on the Plateau well into the dry season.

(S) Lao difficulties in meeting all the objectives of Operation Sayasila stemmed from two primary causes: (1) adverse weather during

[REDACTED]

much of the period and (2) the tenacious enemy, skillfully led by the North Vietnamese commander in MR IV. The leader of the NVA 9th Regiment was General Minh. He was considered such an excellent tactician that the U.S. nickname for him was "Robert E. Lee Minh." He had command of the situation throughout Operation Sayasila, even though his forces were losing ground to the RLG. He was able to shift his units to exploit weaknesses in the Lao offensive, thus lengthening Operation Sayasila from a one-month operation to a three-month campaign. 53

(S) Ground casualties suffered during Operation Sayasila included 136 friendlies KIA and 302 WIA. Enemy casualties were estimated at 177 KIA and 104 WIA. The enemy figures do not include casualties inflicted by TACAIR and gunship sorties since these could not be accurately verified. 54

(S) The amount of time required to secure the two main objectives--Paksong and Saravane--apparently prevented the government from preparing an adequate defense of their gains. Many of the RLG forces were in the field constantly during the campaign, not benefiting from a recuperation period prior to the beginning of the dry season in late October. CAS planners developing the ground operations did so without benefit of a realistic, integrated appraisal of what air support would be required or could be provided and sometimes did not react to a deteriorating situation until it became critical. 55

(S) Nonetheless, Operation Sayasila was a success; territory had been regained at the expense of the North Vietnamese. Even so, the problems in coordination and the lack of complete control of the Bolovens Plateau

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left the victory hollow--the enemy still had the means and the strength to attack.

Operation Bedrock

(S) The objective of Operation Bedrock was to sweep through known operating locations of the 46th NVA battalion to prevent it from establishing control over the rice-rich land around the city of Saravane. This operation began on 1 November when an irregular GM of four battalions began movement south of Route 16/23 from Saravane to a point 17 kilometers southwest of the town. The next day, the GM captured the strategic road junction of Routes 16/23/231, 21 kilometers southwest of Saravane. The friendlies also secured a fire base on Phou Kong Noy overlooking the junction, and they assigned one of their battalions and a heavy weapons company to occupy the site.

(S) Although the friendlies reported numerous enemy contacts on 3 and 4 November, the irregulars were able to maintain the initiative with the aid of TACAIR and heavy weapons. On 5 November, the three remaining battalions captured and occupied Ban Naxain Noy, a village 18 kilometers southwest of Saravane. A villager reported that the headquarters of the 46th NVA battalion had been in the village but had been withdrawn the previous night.⁵⁷ There were no significant enemy contacts during the next several days even though one irregular battalion moved south along Route 16/23 and camped at Ban Lavang, and one irregular battalion moved nine kilometers north of the enemy stronghold at Thateng. On 9 November, the operation was terminated and the GM began withdrawing to Saravane.

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CHAPTER III
OPERATION THAO LA

Since the Royal Lao government had been unsuccessful in securing the Bolovens Plateau during Operation Sayasila, a new plan, named Operation Thao La, was developed. The objective of the plan was to drive the enemy out of the eastern Bolovens by interdicting them at Ban Phon on Route 16 and simultaneously securing the town of Thateng.⁵⁸ Thateng was a large supply base for the NVA 9th Regiment, and its capture would seriously degrade the NVA operational capability.⁵⁹

Due to a JCS message of 28 August 1971 which required JCS approval for helicopter support of multi-battalion operations, the planning for this operation was more thorough than that for Operation Sayasila and involved close coordination with both 7AF and 7/13AF.⁶⁰

Based on this directive, air support planning for Operation Thao La required a longer lead time. The initial request from AIRA for Operation Thao La air support reached 7/13th AF on 15 November. They asked for 10 mining sorties for D-1 (20 November), 18 TACAIR sorties plus two gunships per day for D through D+2, and 24 TACAIR sorties (and two gunships) per day for D+3 through D+14.⁶¹ This longer lead time enabled 7/13th AF to coordinate the request with Seventh Air Force more effectively and permitted Seventh Air Force to use its resources more efficiently.

(S) Operation Thao La involved three task forces. Two of these units were to converge on the town of Thateng from the north and south respectively. The third unit was to take the town of Ban Phon, east of Thateng, then maneuver

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westward, eventually linking with the friendlies converging on Thateng. All three units deployed out of Saravane. (See Figure 6.)

(b) The operation began on 21 November. The northern task force (consisting of three battalions) deployed overland from Saravane, and by 23 November had reached positions five kilometers northeast of its objective without any appreciable enemy resistance.⁶² During the movement south, the friendlies overran what appeared to be the 49th NVA field hospital at Ban Nongnok, only five kilometers northeast of Thateng.⁶³

(c) When the northern task force reached Ban Nongnok on 23 November, seven flights of U.S. TACAIR began to prepare an HLZ at Phou Thiouom. A fourth battalion from Saravane was helilifted the same day by four CH-53 helicopters onto the mountain top located just to the southwest of Thateng.⁶⁴ Initial attempts to land the troops were frustrated by concentrated enemy fire and USAF A-1s escorting the CH-53s had to suppress the heavy ground fire from some 50 NVA troops in the area. During the operation an Air American contract helicopter participating with the CH-53s was damaged and two crewmen were injured. The one-battalion task force established a fire support base (FSB) on Phou Thiouom, providing heavy weapons support over the entire Thateng Gap. One 75mm pack howitzer, three 75mm recoilless rifles, and three 81mm mortars composed the weaponry atop the highground position.⁶⁵

(d) The eastern arm of Operation Thao La was launched on the morning of 21 November. Using USAF and contract helicopters escorted by USAF A-1s, 1,150 irregular MR III troops and 3,000 pounds of cargo were helilifted from

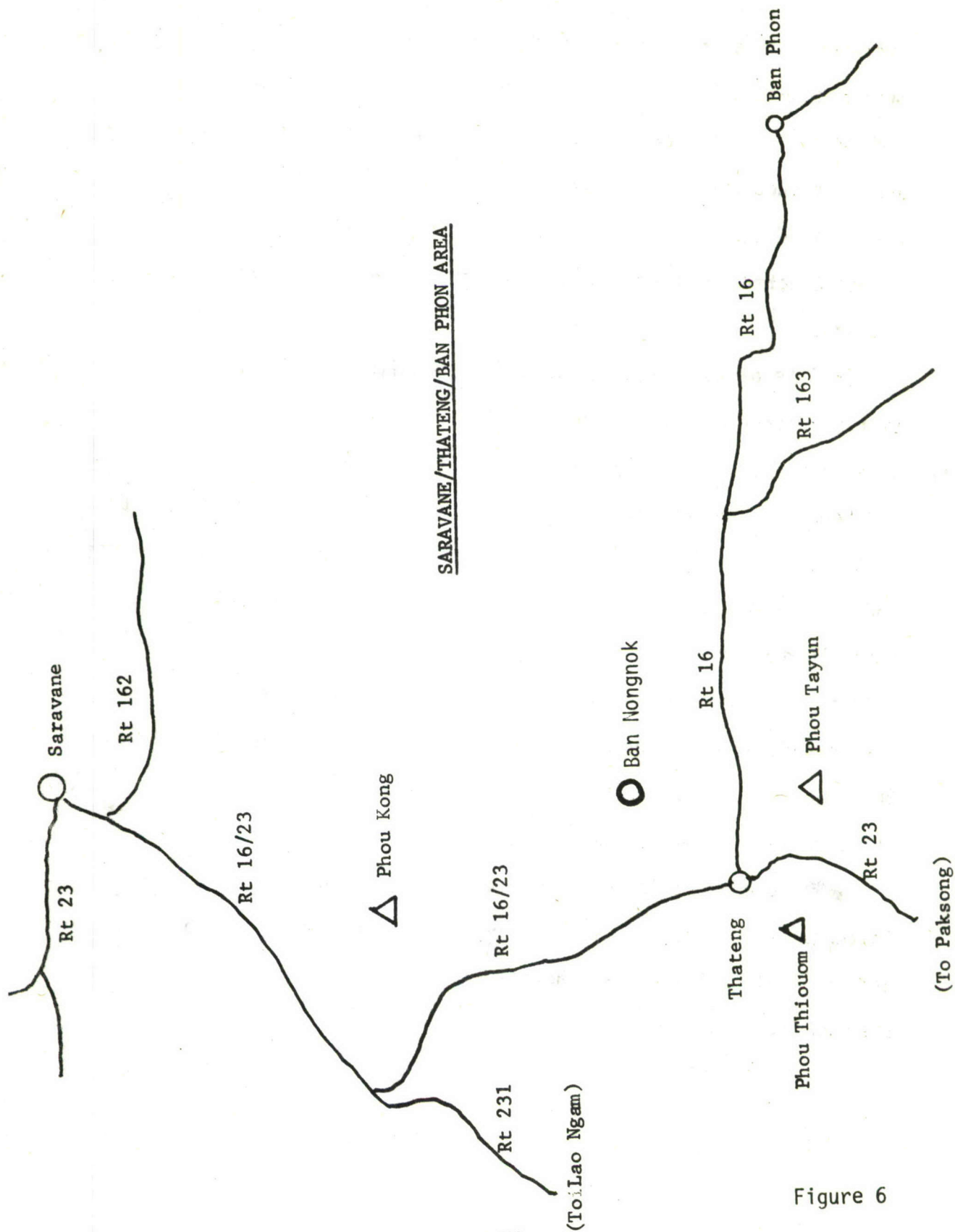


Figure 6

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Saravane to the primary HLZ north of the town. The HLZ had previously⁶⁶ been prepared by F-4 strikes. The helicopters received no ground fire, and by 1100 hours the infiltration of four battalions into the Ban Phon area was successfully terminated. Except for minor skirmishes, Ban Phon was cleared that same day without resistance. All four battalions of the GM established their command posts within a two kilometer radius of the village.

~~67~~ As of 25 November, all friendly units were in place. Enemy reaction to Operation Thao La had been light, and only sporadic fighting was being reported. Irregulars discovered supply caches in the area which had been left unattended by the NVA. For example, one battalion operating north of Thateng reported seizing two tons of sugar, one ton of coffee, and 20 tubs of lard.⁶⁷ On 26 November, RLG forces began consolidating their hold on the Thateng area. Two irregular battalions which had been held in reserve at Toong Set (PS-49--LS-449, XB3781) moved north to join the friendlies entering Thateng from the south. During the afternoon of 26 November, the NVA logistics center of Thateng, which had been occupied⁶⁸ for three years, was captured.

~~69~~ Government forces immediately began to strengthen defenses around Thateng. A 4.2 inch mortar was moved onto a hill south of the village, and an additional 75mm pack howitzer was helilifted onto the fire support base on Phou Thiouom.⁶⁹

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The Ban Phon-Route 16 Operation

(S) On 28 November, the four-battalion irregular task force at Ban Phon began moving west and commenced searching and clearing the Route 16 valley in the direction of Thateng. By 30 November, the GM reported that it was located midway between Ban Phon and Thateng, and that enemy contacts were increasing.⁷⁰

(S) On 1 December, the friendlies captured four enemy trucks on Route 16, two of which were still operable.⁷¹ Encouraged by the success, the GM formed its battalions in a line running north and south at the village of Ban Knokthong and continued its sweeping operation. This was an effort to locate and destroy suspected enemy units and supply points in the area and to disrupt the enemy's rice harvesting activities.⁷²

The Irregular Departure from the Thateng Sector

(S) Toward the end of November, friendly units around Thateng began reporting numerous squad-sized clashes on the town's defense perimeter. The level of contact significantly increased on 3 December when an irregular battalion at Thateng was attacked by a battalion-sized enemy force. During one of the assaults, a squad leader realized that he and his squad were surrounded by over 50 NVA troops. In desperation he requested an air strike on his own position. The request was approved, and RLAF T-28s struck them.⁷³ The squad leader and his squad were reported missing after the battle.*

(S) In response to the increase in enemy activity around Thateng, AIRA-Vientiane requested additional air support. In his message to 7/13th AF he stated that.⁷⁴

*Perhaps an exclamation point would be the most appropriate punctuation! (Ed.)

[REDACTED]

enemy reaction to Thao La is becoming stronger and [more] frequent. From all indications, the enemy is determined to counter friendly efforts to search and clear Thateng/Route 16. . . . Request a minimum of 24 sorties of fast movers to be fragged to MR IV through 11 December. Sorties will be primarily in support of Operation Thao La.

The request was coordinated with Seventh Air Force in Saigon and granted.

(C) The situation around Thateng continued to worsen as reports were received that enemy reinforcements were preparing to move into the Thao La area of operations. As a result, another air support request from AIRA was submitted which asked for immediate CBU-42 mining of two possible approach routes.⁷⁵ In anticipation of continuing heavy enemy activity, AIRA also requested that the fragging of 24 sorties of fast-movers per day be extended through 27 December 1971.⁷⁶ Seventh Air Force approved the request.

(C) Commencing at 2000 hours on 9 December and continuing throughout the night, two NVA infantry battalions supported by four tanks and indirect fire attacked the irregular GM in Thateng. The advancing enemy units split into two columns north of the town, with two tanks supporting each column. During the attack, one of the tanks broke through the Thateng defense perimeter and began firing its guns in a 360 degree circle while turning on one tread. Two irregular battalions dispersed as a result. At 0430 hours on 10 December, the tanks withdrew from the area, leaving⁷⁷ the irregulars with 20 KIA and 23 WIA. Enemy losses were not reported. During the morning of the 10th, RAVEN FACs overhead directed TACAIR strikes

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in support of the RLG forces. Although fighting continued throughout the day, Thateng remained in government hands.

(S) Activity occurring in the Thateng area was merely a segment of a well-coordinated offensive by the enemy against all RLG holdings north of the Bolovens. On 11 December, with increasing enemy pressure growing around Thateng, the decision was made to move four irregular battalions at Thateng north to Saravane, which had fallen on 6 December to a force estimated at three to five NVA battalions, to launch a surprise government counterattack on the provincial capital. It was hoped that such a move might find the NVA unprepared, and the town could be quickly brought under RLG control once again. Thus, Thateng, for the most part, was abandoned to a higher priority. A small contingent remained in Thateng, and the task force along Route 16 continued their clearing operation. The entire area remained precariously under government control. Most of the enemy units apparently shifted direction also in coming to the defense of Saravane.⁷⁸

The Enemy Capture of Saravane

(S) Throughout the month of November, increasing evidence indicated that the enemy was strengthening its force around Saravane. On the morning of 16 November, an irregular team reported an estimated four NVA battalions with heavy weapons in the Toumlane Valley, 19 kilometers northwest of Saravane. FAGs directed RLAF and U.S. TACAIR strike aircraft to the location, resulting in an estimated 70 enemy KBA.⁷⁹ Throughout November, RAVEN FAGs also found evidence of considerable enemy tank and truck activity running generally east-west and north of the Se Don River.⁸⁰

[REDACTED]

(C) The anticipated attack on Saravane came on 5 December at 2200 hours when the enemy began probing friendly positions near the town. At 0500 hours on 6 December, three NVA battalions launched simultaneous attacks on the RLG troops in the area. Throughout the night of 5-6 December, the TICs were supported by an RLAF AC-47 gunship; at daybreak, TACAIR strikes⁸¹ were directed against enemy positions. However, in spite of 60 TACAIR strikes controlled by RAVEN FACs against the NVA, at 1430 hours on 6 December the FAR commander ordered Saravane abandoned, and the friendlies dispersed⁸² north and west of the town.

(C) Once the North Vietnamese had taken Saravane, they began to redeploy their armor forces from the Toumlane Valley into the town. After four tanks and six trucks were reported crossing the Se Don River on the morning of 10 December,⁸³ AIRA requested air support to mine the approaches to the city. These approaches, identified and validated for mining, were the fords of Route 23 across the Se Don River and Route 23 in the Toumlane⁸⁴ Valley.

(C) Following the fall of Saravane, U.S. and RLG officials began planning a counter-offensive to retake Saravane before the NVA could become firmly entrenched in the city. The friendlies from Saravane had regrouped 32 kilometers west of the town several days following the NVA takeover. Between 8 and 15 December, the units were re-equipped and launched⁸⁵ toward the objective. AIRA requested that four sorties of fast movers be fragged to MR IV RAVEN FACs on 15 December to help prepare the area for⁸⁶ the coming assault. Ordnance was to be CBU-42 munitions and MK-36 mines.

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(S) Two FAR battalions, BV-41 and BV-46, comprised the western flank of the attack while an irregular GM from the Thateng sector (see page 28) moved overland to attack from the south. On 20 December, the Thateng GM⁸⁷ was located seven kilometers south-southeast of Saravane.

(S) During 22-23 December, the four irregular battalions from Thateng called in air strikes on enemy positions around Saravane and followed these strikes with ground assaults on the city. An estimated 250 NVA were killed by combined air strikes and ground assaults during the period. Eventually, MR IV commanders decided that even if Saravane could be retaken, the position would be untenable. The four battalions were then ordered to move westward toward Khong Sedone (LS-289, WC8524) along Route 16. The irregulars⁸⁸ linked up with BV-41 and BV-46 while leaving the Saravane area on 24 December.

Operation Thao La Ends

(S) On 16 December, with the departure from Thateng of four irregular⁸⁹ battalions, Operation Thao La was officially closed. Although Thateng was recaptured and Ban Phon was temporarily secured, there appeared to be no substantial gains from the operation. The eastern Bolovens Plateau was not secure, Saravane was lost, and the enemy continued to bring in reinforcements and supplies at will. In short, the government hold on the Bolovens was precarious.

[REDACTED]

CHAPTER IV

FALL OF PAKSONG AND LOSS OF THE BOLOVENS

() Although Paksong experienced 21 probing attacks, it was not severely threatened by the North Vietnamese during the month of November. The primary cause for the lack of significant activity was initially Operation Bedrock. (See page 21.) According to Pathet Lao ralliers, the NVA 9th regiment had been frustrated in their preparations to retake Paksong when the RLG posed a serious threat to Thateng during the early part of November. The NVA position was further irritated by Operation Thao La, during which the RLG did capture Thateng. (See page 25.) Thus, the enemy around Paksong was forced to use economy-of-force tactics. 90

() On 8 November, BI-9 was moved to the Paksong area to join with BV-48 and BV-46 already garrisoning the town. This not only strengthened the RLG defense in Paksong proper, but allowed four battalions of an MR III task force to return to Savannakhet. 91

() During the first week of December, when Saravane was falling and Thateng was coming under increasing pressure, RAVEN FACs in the Paksong sector observed fresh enemy bunkers which, in some cases, were located within 50 meters of friendly positions. Activity increased on 8 December in the Phou Nongkin area when a firefight resulted in two RLG soldiers KIA and 12 WIA. Ten enemy were KIA, with airstrikes accounting for another probable 20 KBA. 92

() Probes against the city by the North Vietnamese increased during 10-17 December. There were 19 attacks concentrated mostly to the north

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and northeast of Paksong. Between 10 and 12 December, clashes ranged in magnitude from short-duration, small-unit firefights to company-sized contacts lasting several hours. The enemy employed B-40 rockets, DK-82 recoilless rifles, and 60mm mortars. The irregulars were supported by artillery, RLAF T-28s, and AC-47s.⁹³ On 13 December, the irregular unit on Phou Nongkin abandoned its position because of strong enemy pressure and redeployed to the twin peaks of Phou Thevada, three kilometers east of Paksong.⁹⁴

(S) On 14 December, a four-battalion irregular force ambushed an NVA concentration which had assembled north of Paksong. On 16 December, this same government force was ambushed with attacks from three sides. The GM was dispersed by heavy ground assaults which followed 60mm and 82mm mortar fire. By the afternoon of 17 December, 425 men of the GM had reached Ban Phakkout, nine kilometers west of Paksong on Route 23.⁹⁵

(S) Pressure from some 1,000 NVA troops continued on friendly positions around Paksong. Instead of direct attacks, the enemy used 60mm and 82mm mortar fire on the friendly forward defensive positions. Resupply of these positions became difficult and, at times, impossible. With the decline in morale of government forces, the enemy pressed to cut Route 23, the last ground means of escape open to the RLG.⁹⁶

(S) RAVEN FAC visual reconnaissance of the northern Bolovens Plateau area indicated enemy patterns of activity similar to those noted prior to the NVA capture of Paksong the previous May. On the night of 18/19 December, FACs sighted vehicle headlights moving into the Phou Nongkin area. Visual reconnaissance of an area 12 kilometers northwest of Paksong the following

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morning revealed possible truck or tank parks in heavy foliage. The following day, FACs reported tank tread marks of perhaps three or four tanks approximately 14 kilometers north of Paksong. In addition, the NVA had moved supplies into protected areas immediately adjacent to Paksong. All conditions seemed favorable for an attack against the town.⁹⁷

(S) While the ground situation in MR IV was critical during the month of December, in northern Laos around the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) it was desperate. On 18 December, NVA forces in MR II launched an offensive to take the strategic plain. Within three days, the friendlies had been swept from the area. The MR II headquarters at Long Tieng (LS-20A, TG8214) was now the primary target for the North Vietnamese. As a result, priorities called for U.S. TACAIR to be utilized in northern Laos and few additional sorties were available for MR IV. Added to this problem, the attempt to retake Saravane on 22-23 December coincided with unseasonably bad weather. The Saravane campaign utilized most of the USAF TACAIR allotted to MR IV. These factors reduced effective TACAIR counterstrikes around Paksong.⁹⁸

(S) On the morning of 24 December, a RAVEN FAC observed an unknown number of NVA near the agricultural station west of Paksong on Route 23. On 25-26 December, AIRA reported that the enemy had deployed several 12.7mm heavy machine guns around Paksong; these machine guns increased the threat to any resupply or airlift attempt.⁹⁹

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(S) On 27 December, after two days of heavy bombardment of the RLG northern defense perimeter at Paksong, two NVA battalions launched a ground assault on the town. The FAR defenders north of Paksong fled into the city with 11 KIA and 4 WIA. The two irregular battalions which had occupied Phou Thevada north and south also abandoned their positions and withdrew into the town.
100

(S) Although the RLG had numerical superiority over the enemy, the friendly forces began to evacuate Paksong on the first day of the attack, withdrawing to the west along Route 23. Four 105mm howitzers and five trucks were among the equipment in Paksong left behind by the departing troops. The North Vietnamese entered and burned the city on the 28th of December.
101

(S) A CAS field report describing the collapse of Paksong stated that
102
the morale of the friendly forces in the Paksong area had been steadily decreasing. . . . FAN BP-104 had received mortar fire nightly since its deployment to the Paksong area on 15 December. One of the three irregular battalions in Paksong was a new, inexperienced group which had only been deployed in Paksong since 21 December. The two other irregular battalions here had recently been under heavy enemy siege at Phou Nongkin for a two week period. The other of the two more experienced battalions was due to go on leave 20 December but had been extended.

(S) On the evening of 28 December, TACAIR destroyed the four 105mm
103
howitzers and the five trucks abandoned in Paksong. With that accomplished, the RLG campaign in MR IV was concluded with no gain--the NVA still controlled the Bolovens and the strategic towns of Paksong and Saravane.

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APPENDIX A

U.S. AND RLAF SORTIES, 28 JUL-28 DECEMBER 1971

<u>U.S.*</u>		<u>RLAF**</u>	
<u>TACAIR***</u>	<u>Gunships</u>	<u>T-28</u>	<u>AC-47</u>
1,973	58	3,778	859

*Sources: 1. Directorate of Operations, 7/13AF
2. 7AF DOYR Computer Printout
3. AIRA Laos DISUM

**Sources: 1. AIRA Laos DISUM
2. JANAF

Note: These numbers represent total MR IV RLAF sorties during this time period. No sortie breakdown was available for the Bolovens area.

***TACAIR includes both USAF and Navy Air sorties during the time period of the Bolovens Campaign.

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APPENDIX B

BOLOVENS CAMPAIGN CASUALTIES, 28 JULY-28 DECEMBER 1971

Government Forces*

KIA: 399
WIA: 1,376
MIA: 343
Total: 2,118

Enemy**

KBA: 653
KIA: 551
WIA: 763
Total: 1,967

*Sources: 1. 7/13 AF Daily Laotian SITREP, 28 Jul-29 Dec 71.
2. AIRA Laos DISUM
3. JANAF

**Sources: 1. 7AF DOYR Computer Printout
2. Directorate of Operations, 7/13AF
3. JANAF
4. WAIS

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APPENDIX C

U.S. AIR-INFLICTED ENEMY BATTLE DAMAGE (BDA)*
28 JULY-28 DECEMBER 1971

Bunkers and other military structures destroyed or damaged . . .	2,015
Weapons destroyed or damaged	50
Tracked and wheeled vehicles destroyed or damaged	15
Secondary fires and explosions	315
Meters of trenches destroyed	563
U.S. sorties RNO**	996

*Sources: 1. 7AF DOYR Computer Printout
2. Directorate of Operations, 7/13AF
3. JANAF
4. WAIS

**U.S. sorties RNO due to darkness, smoke, foliage, and weather.

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FOOTNOTES

1. (S) 7/13AF Daily Laotian Sitrep, 9-12 Jun 71. (Hereafter cited as 7/13 DLS.)
2. (S) Barrel Roll Working Group "Minutes," 15 Jun 71. (Hereafter cited as BRWG "Minutes.")
3. (S) Special Report of Representative, FOV Nr. 13,537.
4. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA, Vientiane to RUMOSRA, 7/13AF, 250415Z Jul 71.
5. (S) Project CHECO, USAF Operations from Thailand, 1 Jan 1967 to 1 Jul 1968, 20 Nov 68. (TS) Only Secret material extracted.
6. (S) Weekly SITREPs, 1 Jan 67-1 Jul 68.
7. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA, Vientiane to RUMOSRA, 7/13AF, 250600Z Jul 71.
8. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA, Vientiane to RUMOSRA, 7/13AF, 250415Z Jul 71.
9. (S) Ibid.
10. (S) Unless otherwise specifically annotated, the references for the chronology of events are the 7/13AF Daily Laotian SITREPs, 28 Jul-29 Dec 71 and all times will be local times ("G" time zone).
11. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 30 Jul 71.
12. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 5 Sep 71.
13. (S) AIRA Laos DISUM, 4 Sep 71.
14. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 30 Sep 71.
15. (S) CAS Field Comment, 7/13AF DLS, 4 Oct 71.
16. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 8 Oct 71.
17. (S) Ibid., 14 Oct 71.
18. (S) Special Report of Representative, FOV Nr. 13,537.
19. (S) Msg, Col G. C. Berger, 7/13AF to Gen John, 7AF, 281250Z Jul 71.
20. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 1 Aug 71.

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21. (S) 4802 JLD to DI 7/13AF, "Memorandum: Laos Report," 20 Sep 71.
22. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 25 Aug 71.
23. (S) Ibid., 7 Jul 71.
24. (S) Ibid., 30 Jul 71.
25. (S) Ibid.
26. (S) Ibid., 7 Aug 71.
27. (S) Ibid., 19 Aug 71.
28. (S) Ibid., 29 Aug 71.
29. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA, Vientiane to RUMOSRA, 7/13AD, 311330Z Aug 71.
30. (S) CAS Field Comment, 7/13AF DLS, 11 Sep 71.
31. (S) AIRA Laos DISUM, 4 Sep 71.
32. (S) Intvw, author with Maj C. C. Cavoli, Hq 7/13AF (Current Operations), 31 Jan 72.
33. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 9 Sep 71.
34. (S) CAS Field Comment, 7/13AF DLS, 11 Sep 71.
35. (S) Ops Ord VI-71 (Operation Sayasila Follow-up Plan for Capture of Paksong).
36. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 12 Sep 71.
37. (S) Ibid., 13 Sep 71.
38. (S) 7/13AF Daily Intelligence Briefing.
39. (S) End of Tour Report, Maj Gen J. G. Wilson, DO, 7AF (U), 7AF, 1 Dec 71, p. 5.
40. (S) Msg, 7/13AF to 7AF, 151015Z Sep 71.
41. (S) Msg, 7/13AF to 7AF, 181000Z Sep 71.
42. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 21-25 Sep 71.

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43. (S) WAIS, 29 Sep-6 Oct 71.
44. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 4 Oct 71.
45. (S) Ibid., 11 Oct 71.
46. (S) Ibid., 13 Oct 71.
47. (S) Ibid., 8 Oct 71.
48. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 15-18 Oct 71.
49. (S) Ibid., 23 Oct 71.
50. (S) Ibid., 29 Oct 71.
51. (S) WAIS, 27 Oct-3 Nov 71 and DLS, 1 Nov 71.
52. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 1 Nov 71.
53. (S) Ibid., 17 Aug 71.
54. (S) 4802 JLD to DI 7/13AF, "Memorandum: Laos Report," 20 Sep 71.
55. (S) End of Tour Report, Maj Gen D. R. Searles, Dep Cmdr 7/13AF, (U) 7/13AF, 1 Jul 71-8 Sep 72. (Hereafter cited as Searles EOT.)
56. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 3-10 Nov 71.
57. (S) WAIS, 3 Nov 71.
58. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 20-22 Nov 71.
59. (S) Ibid., 29 Nov 71.
60. (S) Searles EOT.
61. (S) Msg. OUSAIRA, Vientiane to RUMOSRA, 7/13AF, 15 Nov 71.
62. (S) WAIS, 17-24 Nov 71.
63. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 24 Nov 71.
64. (S) AIRA Laos DISUM, 24 Nov 71.
65. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 240200Z Nov 71; Searles EOT.
66. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 211825Z Nov 71.

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67. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 260110Z Nov 71.
68. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 1 Dec 71.
69. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 290420Z Nov 71.
70. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 300045Z Nov 71.
71. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 010515Z Dec 71.
72. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 1 Dec 71.
73. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 060045Z Dec 71.
74. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA to 7/13AF, 3 Dec 71.
75. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA to 7/13AF, 050245Z Dec 71.
76. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA to 7/13AF, 3 and 9 Dec 71.
77. (S) 7/13 DLS, 10 Dec 71.
78. (S) Ibid., 6-16 Dec 71.
79. (S) Ibid., 17 Nov 71.
80. (S) Ibid., 1 Dec 71.
81. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 070100Z Dec 71.
82. (S) 7/13 DLS, 7 Dec 71.
83. (S) Msg, 7AF to CSAF, 122306Z Dec 71.
84. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA to 7/13AF, 13 Dec 71.
85. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 6-15 Dec 71.
86. (S) Msg, OUSAIRA to 7/13AF, 13 Dec 71.
87. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 16-22 Dec 71.
88. (S) Ibid., 23-26 Dec 71.
89. (S) Ibid., 17 Dec 71.
90. (S) WAIS, 10-17 Nov 71.
91. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 8 Nov 71.

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- 92. (S) WAIS, 1-14 Dec 71.
- 93. (S) WAIS, 15-22 Dec 71.
- 94. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 13 Dec 71.
- 95. (S) WAIS, 15-22 Dec 71.
- 96. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 15-22 Dec 71.
- 97. (S) Ibid., 18-21 Dec 71.
- 98. (S) Ibid., 21-23 Dec 71.
- 99. (S) Ibid., 27 Dec 71.
- 100. (S) WAIS, 28 Dec 71-4 Jan 72.
- 101. (S) 7/13AF DLS, 27-29 Dec 71.
- 102. (S) Ibid.
- 103. (S) Ibid., 29 Dec 71.

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GLOSSARY

AA	Anti-aircraft
AAA	Anti-aircraft Artillery
ABF	Attack By Fire
AIRA	Air Attache
ARMA	Army Attache
BC	Battalion Commando
BI	Battalion Infantry
BP	Battalion Parachutist
BV	Battalion Volunteer
CAS	Controlled American Source
CBU	Cluster Bomb Unit
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
CP	Command Post
CSAF	Chief of Staff Air Force
DISUM	Daily Intelligence Summary
FAC	Forward Air Controller
FAG	Forward Air Guide
FAN	Forces Armee Neutralist
FAR	Forces Armee Royale
FSB	Fire Support Base
GM	Group Mobile
HLZ	Helicopter Landing Zone
HQ	Headquarters
IFR	Instrument Flying Rules
JANAF	Joint Army Navy Air Force
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KBA	Killed by Air
KIA	Killed in Action
LOC	Lines of Communication
LS	Lima Site (short take-off and landing strip)

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MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MIA	Missing in Action
MK	Mark
mm	millimeter
MR	Military Region
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OPN	Operation
OUSAIRA	Office of the U.S. Air Attache
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PDJ	Plaine des Jarres
PL	Pathet Lao
PS	Papa Site
RLAF	Royal Laotian Air Force
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
RNO	Results Not Observed
SITREP	Situation Report
TACAIR	Tactical Air
TF	Task Force
TIC	Troops in Contact
UTM	Universal Transverse Mercator
VR	Visual Reconnaissance
WAIS	Weekly Air Intelligence Summary
WBA	Wounded by Air
WIA	Wounded in Action

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